

**Appropriations Committee
Health Subcommittee
February 24, 2022**

**Public Hearing on:
House Bill 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023
(Department of Developmental Services)**

Good afternoon/evening, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Heather Marquis and I am here representing Goodwill of Western and Northern CT. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the state budget.

Founded in 1950, Goodwill's of Western and Northern CT is a nonprofit organization with a mission aimed at strengthening communities by helping people maximize independence and self-sufficiency through job training and other support services. Our agency's framework is based on person-centered services and an extensive understanding of the workforce development system, particularly for those requiring multifaceted care.

I want to thank you for the 4% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for community nonprofits that you fought to include in last year's budget. I'm here tonight to ask you to honor the long term plan to address underfunding of community nonprofits and increase funding this year by an additional \$461 million, or 8% in total for FY23.

This funding is needed now more than ever. Without it, we risk destabilizing our state's community service delivery system which has been upended by the pressures of COVID-19 and an exponential increase in the need for service in our communities.

At the same time, we're facing unprecedented challenges recruiting and retaining staff of all skill levels and salaries.

Human services are now in competition with companies like Amazon and Walmart that require no specialized training, are paying more and offering more hiring incentives. Clinical staff are being lured away by lucrative offers from school districts and telehealth companies. Across the state, The Alliance found that 18%, nearly 1 in 5, nonprofit jobs are vacant right now.

The increase in this year's budget, while very much appreciated, has quickly been absorbed by rising costs. Over the last year, inflation rose by almost six percent, surpassing the COLA in the current year's budget.

Nonprofit Providers funded by the Department of Developmental Services and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services are grateful for the efforts of the Appropriations Committee and Governor Lamont to address wage and funding issues specific to services.

Finally, please support please support the following proposals by Governor Lamont from the American Rescue Plan Act for DDS:

- \$5 million in FY23 for infrastructure improvements for public and privately-owned camps.
- \$5 million in FY23 to provide additional recreational and leisure opportunities to facilitate socialization and connections as the state emerges from the pandemic.

Thank you for your Consideration,

Heather Marquis
Vices President of Human Services
Goodwill of Western and Northern CT